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THE
FATE OF SPARTA;
OR,
THE RIVAL KINGS.
A TRAGEDY.

AS IT IS ACTED
AT THE THEATRE-ROYAL,
IN
DRURY-LANE.

BY MRS. COWLEY.

L O N D O N:

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MDCCCLXXXVIII.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

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TO

JOHN COWLEY, Esq.

WHEN letters were in their infancy, and when knowledge and the arts were groping their way through seemingly impervious mists, some splendid name was necessary to give an author celebrity—hence the custom of DEDICATIONS; hence those floods of adulation, which poured from the press, and outraged the feelings of the addresser and the addressed.

But now, when poets and writers of every denomination, accept patronage only from the public, and when fame is to be obtained only by deserving it, the custom of dedicating can be continued, only, as a medium through which to convey personal respect. It is *delightful* to make an offering to those we love, when that offering has had a value stamp on it, by the voice of the world. Thus THE FATE OF SPARTA wreathed with laurels, seeks you in the recesses of a counting-house; and whilst you are engaged in supporting our national manufactures, and invoking commerce from her distant abodes, solicits your attention to the MUSES.

When I hinted an intention to address this Tragedy to you, you shrunk from the idea, and desired me to choose a worthier name. My dearest Brother, where shall I

A 2

turn

turn to find it? THIS shall *not* be an address of adulation, therefore I shall only observe, that those to whom you are known, will acknowledge that I am justified in the choice I have made of a patron; and those who know you not, will do my pride the credit to believe I should not have selected for that patron, a man whose name and whose situation did not reflect honour on me.

There is yet another motive for using my *poetic wand* to call your shade before posterity. As your regard has been one of the chief blessings of my life, I wish those who succeed us to know how much I hold myself indebted to it: I wish my own children and yours to feel the sweet influence of our mutual friendship; and as they will carry in their veins the same blood, to cherish in their hearts the same attachment. DEAR Children! who will wander again and again over this page, after the hand which traces it moves no more, after the heart to which it is addressed, hath ceased to beat!

I was going to conclude with this pensive idea, but I recollect that I have not yet mentioned in *dedicatory form*, the work dedicated. The following Tragedy then, Sir, is in its fable and events, all invention—except in the conduct of Chelonice, and the scene in the Temple;—and with the circumstance on which *that* is founded, I have taken some liberties. Other deviations from history will strike you, but if I have altered circumstances, I have strictly abided by CHARACTER. Leonidas at Drury-Lane, as in Sparta, is artful, tyrannical, and doats on his daughter. The impetuous and crafty Amphares, who
had

had destroyed Agis, continues his system. Cleombrotus, ambitious and tolerably obstinate, is yet sensible to the merits of his wife. He, though my hero, is not “a faultless monster;”—if the lady should be *too perfect*, I appeal to the grave authority of Plutarch, who I believe is not suspected of writing fictions to compliment women.

Struck with admiration at the slight yet powerful touches, with which that biographist had sketched the character of CHELONIS*, I wondered such a character had never been brought on the Stage, to do honour to her sex;—yet I had joy in reflecting, that this was precisely the age in which it ought to be done, for this age boasted a Mrs. SIDDONS.

How much the FATE OF SPARTA has been indebted to that lady, and to some of the other performers, the public prints bear testimony—and I gratefully record it: because it is a circumstance highly flattering to myself, and because I wish the present I thus offer you, to be surrounded with every appendage that can make you feel it inestimable.

With the best wishes and affection,

I have the honour to be,

Your devoted humble servant,

H. COWLEY.

* In his Life of Agis.

PROLOGUE;

WRITTEN BY MRS. COWLEY.

SPOKEN BY MR. WROUGHTON.

TO ask your favour, we're by custom bound—
Thus Prologue bows before you to the ground.
But interchange of favours, we are told,
Is a choice method to make friendship hold.
My gift is this;—those chilly wintry nights,
Whilst the frost glitters, and the north wind bites,
I'll waft you to the gentlest summer skies,
Where rose-buds swell, and the soft zephyr flies;
Where the bright sun, with scarce diminish'd ray,
November's month bids charm like florid May;
Where, beneath myrtle shades the lover dies,
Whilst gales, with fragrance fraught, perfume his sighs—
To GREECE I welcome ye from Drury-lane,
Where taste, and arts first rear'd th' immortal fane.

You've heard of Spartan boys, who let young foxes
Feed on their blood, placid as beaus in boxes
Sans shriek, or groan. You've heard of sable broth
More priz'd than rich iced creams, and luscious froth;
With many other monstrous—noble things,
At which more *naughty* times have had their flings.
But long posterior to that virtuous day,
Th' events were born on which we found our play.

Sparta

PROLOGUE.

Sparta conceiv'd a whim to be polite,
Black broth, and *bosom'd* foxes took their flight;
Then luxury her flood-gates open'd wide,
And fashion onward roll'd its heady tide;
Plain dress and frugal meals soon dropt their yokes,
And GODLIKE SPARTANS—liv'd like other folks;
Turn'd fiddlers, brokers, merchants, gam'd and betted,
This boasting what he *won*—this what he *netted*.
Ladies their Op'ra—Boxers had their stage,
And *Spartan Humphries'* soon became the rage;
Their placemen sinecures could ne'er refuse,
And zeal-infected Lords, at-times turn'd Jews.

Their Doctors sage then hit upon a plan,
To mend the weak degen'rate creature Man.
They bad two monarchs wear the splendid crown,
Castor and Pollux like—this up—that down? [*In another voice*
Oh no, they both at once must mount the throne,
And subject slaves, in double slav'ry groan.

'Twas wise, no doubt—yet this too pass'd away,
But first burst forth the deeds which fill our play.
The ground-work true—a little fancy grant,
Where FACT had in its bounties been but scant.
Poets will fib, all nations have allow'd it;
And ours with blushing terror has avow'd it.
Oh pardon where you can, and if you please,
This anxious hour precedes a night of ease.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Leonidas (<i>King of Sparta</i>)	Mr. BENSLEY.
Cleombrotus (<i>the deposed King</i>)	Mr. KEMBLE.
Amphares, - - - - -	Mr. BARRYMORE.
Nicrates, - - - - -	Mr. WHITFIELD.
Mezentius, - - - - -	Mr. WILLIAMS.
Corex, - - - - -	Mr. STAUNTON.
Sarpedon, - - - - -	Mr. PHILLIMORE.
Attalus, - - - - -	Mr. BENSON.
High Priest, - - - - -	Mr. CHAPLIN.
Priest, - - - - -	Mr. WILSON.
Officer, - - - - -	Mr. BATES.
Chelonice,* - - - - -	Mrs. SIDDONS.

* *This name, on the stage, is pronounced as four syllables. It was thought necessary to observe this, as the measure hardly any where fixes it.*

THE
FATE OF SPARTA;

OR,
THE RIVAL KINGS.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Forest.

In the back ground a Camp, before the Walls of Sparta;

Enter MEZENTIUS and COREX.

COREX.

THE conflict of the elements is past,
The tempest which so lately seem'd to shake
The chrystal walls of heaven, is appeas'd,
And agitated nature sinks to rest.

MEZENTIUS.

Rather she bids the elements be still
That other conflicts may unfold their rage.
Her war is past;—and now the war of men,

B

The

2 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

The rush of armies, and the shouts of death,
Will shake this azure vault; where rolling thunders
Hurrying but now, the crooked lightnings on,
Hail'd with grand horrors the devoted night.

C O R E X.

No wonder that Olympus should take part,
When EMPIRES vibrate in the scales of fate.
Not more illustrious was the hour, in which
Enthroned Gods hung o'er the fate of Troy,
And granted to celestial Juno's hate,
A people's ruin.

M E Z E N T I U S.

The avengeful Gods
Look *so* on Sparta, and its hoary tyrant!
But where's Cleombrotus? The trumpets sound,
Yet sound to arms in vain! Is *this* the leader
Who from the fields of Thrace and proud Iberia,
Brought us to reap the richer spoils of Sparta?
Where is the courage which should lead us on,
And rouse the tardy valour of his soldiers?

C O R E X.

Suspect his courage! Oh his daring mind
Spurns at all dangers, and his well-earn'd fame
Repels each hov'ring doubt.—Pierce thou the wood
Where yonder cypress hides the dazzling moon;—
I'll this way bend my steps to seek the prince,
For 'tis within these glades he shuns the camp,
And to reflection gives his hours of glory, (*going*).

[*Trumpets sound.*

He

THE RIVAL KINGS.

3

He hears Bellona's voice; its powerful charm
Will break the spells of gloomy solitude,
And give us back the warrior and the hero!

[Exeunt opposite sides.]

Enter CLEOMBROTUS.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Resistless sounds! ye chase my lethargy,
And rouse the soldier in my languid heart—
I'll yield—I'll yield it to the glorious impulse!
O moon! whose silver beams shed their pale splendor
On those proud spires, adorning them for sacrifice—
Shine on! Ride cloudless thro' th' etherial plains,
That when gigantic war strides o'er yon battlements,
And prints in ev'ry street its sanguine steps,
Guided by thee, his iron arm may spare
All, who invoke its mercy! Thy chaste light
Shall lead the matron, and the trembling maid
Inviolatè to safety.——Me it guides
To Chelonice; the fell tyrant's daughter,
Yet my lov'd wife.—*Dian!* avert from her,
And from my beauteous boy, each hov'ring ill,
That to this melting heart I yet may press them,
And charm their terrors with the voice of love!

Enter MEZENTIUS.

MEZENTIUS.

At length then, prince! I've traced thy wand'ring steps.
Th' impatient soldiers seek thee thro' the camp;
E'en the hired mercenaries, now, boast ardors;
And thou, whose *all* depends on this grand moment,
Retir'st to shades, wrapt coolly in reflection.

B 2

CLEOM-

THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CLEOMBROTUS.

Not cool, Mezentius, tho' alone, and thoughtful—
 For oh! my throbbing breast is *torn* with feeling:
 The mercenary's heart expands with joy
 For the rude hour of plunder; mine, my soldier
 Contracts with fear, lest that wish'd hour should grasp
 In undistinguish'd ruin, her I love,
 With him, who though her father, I must hate.

MEZENTIUS.

These are a lover's fears.

[*Contemptuously.*]

CLEOMBROTUS.

They are a husband's!
 When I consider—in the rage of battle
 What various ruins stalk beneath its banners,
 Not to be agoniz'd, is not to feel.
 The engines which must level yonder towers
 May, as they play, form Chelonice's grave!

MEZENTIUS.

She hath forsaken thee.—This wife so lov'd,
 Hath left thy bosom for a tyrant father's,
 Who seeks thy life, and robs thee of thy crown—
 And if I woman know——

CLEOMBROTUS.

Thou know'st not her!
 Her's is no common heart.—Melting with love,
 Alive to nature's softest impulses,
 Tend'rest of all the tender faithful sex,
 Yet where her duty bids, she has a mind
 Firm and unbending, as the laws of truth.

MEZEN-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

5

MEZENTIUS.

Erring report, hath spoke of her with honour.

CLEOMBROTUS.

With *highest* honour it shall speak yet err not.
When th' Ephori bestowed on me the crown,
Making me colleague with her faithless sire,
Thou'st heard how soon his lust of power impell'd him
To seek my ruin, and to reign alone.

MEZENTIUS.

His faction sunk, and you became triumphant !

CLEOMBROTUS.

'Twas then Leonidas, wrapt in despair,
Fled to Minerva's altar.—Chelonice
Followed him there, leaving a splendid throne
And all the joys that wait on royalty,
To weep, and watch upon the dewy pavement,
Where stretch'd, she found an abdicated father.

MEZENTIUS.

Let Sparta's daughters then be nam'd with reverence,
And proudly boast amongst the Grecian maids,
They breathe the air which nourish'd Chelonice !
Have you not since oft woo'd her to your arms ?

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh yes, and there to fold her, would be transport !
But in her heart the filial principle
So strongly burns, that easier 'twere to woo
The murmur'ing ring-dove from her unfledg'd brood

6 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Than her, from him, who gave the charmer life.
She thinks his safety, too, hangs on her presence—
Oh, can I blame the cruel, lovely duty,
Which thus, unwilling, holds her from my arms?

MEZENTIUS.

Fortune! benignant look upon this night,
And a few hours shall see thee king, and husband!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Dear! glorious titles! how my soul will grasp ye!

MEZENTIUS.

The foldiers all in arms, await the signal.

CLEOMBROTUS.

First, let the altar's blaze propitiate heaven.
Mars and Bellona, guide me in the battle!
Precede my chariot, nerve afresh my arm,
And give me ardors to *command* my fate!
The gen'rous transport labours in my breast,
And conquest beams already on my helmet.
See!—Vict'ry bends from yonder starry seat,
And waves her flag triumphant to the town—
Goddeſs! I come! [Exit drawing his sword.

Scene changes to the Palace of Leonidas.

Enter AMPHARES and NICRATES, meeting.

NICRATES.

Oh my Amphares! what an hour for Sparta!

AMPHARES.

THE RIVAL KINGS.

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AMPHARES.

The hour indeed is busy, and important.
See how the streets are throng'd ! Each house pours forth
Its fearful inmates ; whilst the eager hum
Of the enquiring multitude, that breaks
Like distant surges on the invaded ear,
Tears the repose, of balmy night's still sabbath.

NICRATES.

How wide th' event from the unblest design !
When Agis, the first colleague of our prince,
Lost by ambitious arts his crown and life,
The Ephori adjudg'd his vacant throne
To Chelonice's Lord ;—uniting thus
The father and the son, they hop'd to bind
The fate of Sparta, in the wreathes of peace:

AMPHARES.

Weak short-liv'd hope ! for mutual jealousies
Soon sprung in either breast, which nurs'd by faction,
Grew strong, and shook th' unwieldy fabric down.
Whence are the king and princess ?

NICRATES.

From the temple ;
Where vows and tears, and immolated victims,
Yet strive to smoothe the fullen brow of fate.

AMPHARES.

Stern Fate demands far other immolations.
Cleombrotus leads armies flesh'd and keen,
As morning hounds, when thro' the dew they course
The lightning footed stag ! who can preserve ye ?

NICRATES.

2 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

NICRATES.

The king himself! let him invest Cleombrotus
With the disputed sceptre; with the crown
Sparta adjudg'd him, and his fathers wore.
Surely your eye, Amphares, speaks a language
Too gayly placed for so sad a moment.

AMPHARES.

Brother! my spirit was not made for peace.
The burnish'd raven loves not more the tempest
In which he sails up-borne by warring winds,
Than I, the tempest of contending states:
'Tis in such storms superior natures rise,
And find a station, niggard Fate denied them.

NICRATES.

Kindred, yet uncongenial, are our souls!
Hadst thou possess'd a mind less turbulent,
Cleombrotus upon a steady throne
Had now been fix'd; and Lacedemon's hopes
Nourish'd, and blooming, in the lap of peace.

AMPHARES.

Never; for spite of old Lycurgus' law,
Which doom'd us to be rul'd by double tyranny,
A *biarchy* beyond each mode of slav'ry,
Mad power e'er fram'd to gall a nation's neck,
Is that which least admits of peace, or rule.
'Twas *therefore* I dethron'd Cleombrotus;
But with such secret and coercive skill,
That he believes me yet his friend.

NICRATES.

THE RIVAL KINGS.

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NICRATES.

Leonidas

And he *together* reign'd, *together* sway'd
The Spartan sceptre ; nor did hell-born discord
Disturb, thro' six autumnal suns, their peace.
Ten months Leonidas hath reign'd *alone*,
And all is anarchy, distress and war.

AMPHARES.

And all shall so remain, 'till I have work'd
Thro' all these tempests, for myself, a day.
Glowing with brightness, and unceasing lustre.—
I would unfold my heart yet more, but see !
The king and beauteous Chelonice come.

Enter LEONIDAS and CHELONICE, *with Guards and Attendants.*

LEONIDAS.

Let all the troops be gather'd on the ramparts—
The troops !
Let ev'ry man whose arm can wield a sabre,
Let beardless boys and indolent old age,
Rouse at the call !—Those leave their darling sports,
And these forget their aches ;—let all unite
To crush the hopes and arms, of proud Cleombrotus.

CHELONICE.

Oh !—

C

LEONI-

10 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

LEONIDAS.

Why sigh'st thou, Chelonice?—*Can* thy heart,
Say, *dares* it feel one evanescent pang,
That a rebellious foe shall be opposed,
And perish?

CHELONICE.

That foe is Chelonice's husband.

LEONIDAS.

Grant that he is; is not *his* foe, thy father?
Oh speak! would'st have me be his slave or conqueror?

(*pausing*)

Unduteous silence! which too strongly speaks.
Thou would'st behold me dragg'd beneath this dome;
My aged limbs embrac'd by iron shackles,
My time-blanch'd head dash'd on the marble floor,
Because the perpetrator of those ills,
Is the lov'd husband, of my only child! [*snceeringly.*]

CHELONICE.

That he's the husband of thy only child,
Heaven, and thyself doth know.—But when that child
Forgets amidst her griefs that thou'rt her father;
When she forsakes thee in the hour of sorrow,
Or owns a duty to thy conqueror —
Then may the Gods be deaf to all her pray'rs,
And shame and infamy weigh down her name!

LEONIDAS.

Then, daughter, banish from your brow these clouds
Which boldly censure, whom thy speech yet spares.

Enter ATTALUS.

Hasty thy steps! ———thy news?

AT-

ATTALUS.

One from the camp,
 Seiz'd and impell'd by tortures, hath confest,
 Cleombrotus, this night triumphant means
 To fix his standards on thy palace gates.
 His mercenary army mad for plunder,
 And all the various rapines claim'd by victors,
 Urge on our fate.—The miners now beneath us,
 Form, for the quick, a wide capacious grave;
 The batt'ring rams already rear their heads,
 Threat'ning our walls, with sudden dissolution.

LEONIDAS.

Why then let ruin come!—'tis my election.
 Near twenty years I've borne the Spartan sceptre;
 And shall I, at his bidding, fling it from me
 Like a light toy, of which possession cloy's me?
 No, I'll reign still—and still *alone* will reign,
 Or give up life, and sovereignty together.

ATTALUS.

Unhappy Sparta! then thy fate is fix'd.
 T' oppose is vain; let's stand aloof, and watch
 The gath'ring cloud, which bursting will destroy us.

LEONIDAS.

How slave! what, murmur at my will! Dispute
 His word, whose breath annihilates thy race!
 What are ye all, but creatures of my breath?
 I doom ye life—rejoice! I bid ye die—
 Sink silent to your graves!

Now Chelonice,
 Prepare thy mind for this night's great event!

12 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

For ere its circling minutes have been number'd,
Thou'lt in thy father's blood walk to his throne,
Or see thy husband wett'ring at my feet.
Thy heart *must* make a choice.—For one of us
Thy prayers must mount to heaven.—Tell me not which,
Lest this old heart's last pangs be render'd stronger;
Lest thy fierce husband's sword within my breast
Should bite more keen—knowing that there 'twas sped,
By a lov'd daughter's wishes!

[Exit, followed by all but Nicrates.]

NICRATES. (*observing Chelonic.*)

Fix'd and mute,

She gives to grief, a force, beyond the storm
Of common female woes.—Pardon me, Princess!
Oh break a silence, which too strongly *speaks*.
Flow, precious tears, and give her sorrows vent!

CHELONICE.

Tears, Nicrates! dost think such woes as mine,
Can melt in tears?—Bid *lighter* sorrows weep!
Mine shall be cloister'd in my sick'ning heart.

NICRATES.

All-judging Heaven! What then are power and beauty?
What, all the virtues which adorn the mind,
Since all united, can't ensure repose?

CHELONICE.

My soul hath fortitude, but oh, its griefs are keen!
How shall I shape its wishes? how my heart
Compel to prayer? when ev'ry hope it forms—
Such is my horrid fate! must be a crime
Either against my father, or my lord.

NICRA-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

M

NICRATES.

Oh! that I'd words —

CHELONICE.

This is a night of deeds.

Such deeds! — And cannot I — oh cannot I,
Whom most those deeds concern, by one bold act
Turn from my fated race, the ills which threaten?
Hear me, Olympus! — Regal Juno, hear!
Inspire your suppliant — send a ray of light,
To guide me, in the darkness which surrounds me!

NICRATES.

The last sad ray, thy father hath extinguish'd.
Since *you* can't move his purpose, all is lost.
E'en whilst we speak, destruction hastens on;
This very hour, your husband leaves the camp. —

CHELONICE. (*eagerly.*) -

Enough! thou'st said it — Heaven speaks through thee.
My husband, and the camp! — yes, to the camp
I'll bend my lonely and advent'rous steps;
There, to his heart I'll plead my father's cause,
Wrest from his strong resentments all I ask,
And bring back strength to Sparta's tott'ring walls.

NICRATES.

Oh Princess! 'tis the sudden thought of frenzy.
The camp! — think on the dangers —

CHELONICE.

Oh! what are dangers, when such *duties* call?
The spirit of my ancestors is on me;
A sacred fervor seizes on my soul,
A fire unknown, glows in my trembling veins,
And chases from my heart, each female weakness.

14 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

NICRATES.

Heroism !

How false to say, thou'rt only made for man !

CHELONICE.

My *father*, and my *country* ! Oh for these,
Fearless, I'd lead an army to a breach,
Scale hostile walls, and leap like him of Macedon
Amidst the foe ; and whilst the whizzing deaths
Sigh'd round my head,
Scorn their mock terrors, and their painless wounds.

NICRATES.

Prudence avault !—Strong ardors in a cause
Righteous as this, seem the still voice of fate,
That thus in secret whispers, urges on
To perfect its decrees.

CHELONICE.

———Yet I'll not slight

The sage precautions prudence would suggest.
These royal weeds ill suit a wanderer's speed ;——
The habit of a priestess shall conceal me.
Hallowed, beneath that sacred robe I pass,
Nor friend, nor foe, presume to know my errand ;——
That errand sanctify, all ye, who rule
The actions of mankind ! Howe'er design'd,
Howe'er begun our deeds, yours is the end.
We mark the goal, and blind begin our race,
In paths diverging from the happy place ;
'Tis ye who guide us in the way unknown,
The motive ours, th' events are all your own !

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE RIVAL KINGS.

15

ACT II. SCENE I.

*The Tent of Cleombrotus. Cleombrotus surrounded by
Generals, &c.*

CLEOMBROTUS. *(rising.)*

To the north bastion, Perdicas, lead you
Th' Iberian troops; and Menecrates, you,
Support the Thracians at the eastern gate.
I will myself lead on my loyal Spartans;
Then if I fall, I fall 'midst those, whose rights
I should too cheaply purchase with my life;—
If I am conqueror, with *them* to conquer,
Will add to victory a sweeter sense,
And make my laurels dearer than my crown.

COREX.

Live, prince!—live ever on the throne of Sparta!

CLEOMBROTUS.

He only lives a *prince*, who lives a *patriot*;
And he who loves not those, he's rais'd to govern,
Is not their monarch, but their scourge.

MEZENTIUS.

The night wears on, and thy devoted army
Demand to place thee, ere its noon be past,
Upon that seat, thou know'st so well to fill.

CLEOM-

CLEOMBROTUS.

Instant I'll join, and lead them to the battle.
 Their force superior, and their honest cause
 Must doubly act upon our fear-struck foes,
 And bid them spare the horrors of a carnage.

Enter Officer.

Thy face hath tidings!

Officer.

From the town a priestess,
 With hasty steps, and accents that breathe music
 Sweet, and resistless as the golden lyre
 Of beamy-hair'd Apollo, seeks thy tent
 Royal Cleombrotus!

CLEOMBROTUS.

A priestess! say'st thou?

Surely of magnitude must be the errand
 Which asks a messenger so pure, and holy.
 Retire, my friends; 'tis due to rank like her's,
 In a few moments he who bids you go,
 Shall bid ye *follow*!
 Nor will he stop, 'till his glad voice shall hail you
 Victors, in Sparta. (*they go*). Now attend the virgin.

(The officer goes out and re-enters with CHELONICE.)

Thus, holy maid! lowly and wondering,
 I greet your presence.—Oh what great behest,
 Can have impell'd thee from thy hallow'd couch,
 To seek amidst the hurry of a camp
 A care-worn soldier?

CNE-

CHELONICE.

Couch, Cleombrotus?

Dost thou then think within the mournful walls
These feet have left, that one unfeeling wretch
Can seek a couch, or meditate repose?

Thou hast our sleep.—Our balmly rest lies tenter'd,
On the sharp points thou'lt levell'd at our hearts.

Restore our rest! bid the soft God of sleep

Again revisit our long watchful lids!

It is for this I seek thee in thy camp;

For this that humbly in the dust I bend,

Asking thy pity, for our wretched Sparta,

CLEOMBROTUS.

But that I dare not touch thy sacred form,

Thou should'st not humbly bend.—Oh, Priests, rise!

[*She rises.*]

If this thy errand to our martial plain,

'T were well the fire that burns within your temple,

Yet felt your feeding hand.—Your altars, virgin!

They are the places for your prayers to rise from;

There, mix'd with incense, they might reach Olympus,

But here, alas! they fall on sterile earth—

Or must return, unanswer'd, to your bosom.

CHELONICE.

Oh, is it possible! Canst thou who own'st

A soldier's gen'rous feelings, think a moment

On the dread horrors of this waning night,

And yet resolve to pull those horrors on us?

D

CLEOM-

18 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CLEOMBROTUS.

Bid your own sov'reign save ye! Oh, Leonidas,
How wretched is this art! Yield me my crown!
And not descend to seek the aid of women
To deprecate the vengeance thou provok'st!

CHELONICE.

Oh, by the flame that burns to chaste Minerva,
Leonidas *swoops* not to supplicate;
Knows not the step that I unprompted take!
Well dost thou know his haughty, princely soul,
That lighter holds the heavy ills thou'rt charg'd with,
Than to submit and invoke thy pity.

CLEOMBROTUS.

'Tis well; his firmness shall be firmly met.
Return then, priestesses! let your king prepare
His roughest welcome for unbidden guests.
His roughest welcome we have sworn to merit;
And not a heart within this banner'd field,
But will sustain the arm his oath hath bound.

CHELONICE.

Oh! for a voice to *perjure* them—
'Twere a celestial crime! Cleombrotus,
Is there not one voice—Stubborn! ask thy heart,
Is there not one could move thee? Chelonice!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh, name her not; her image ruins me!
Her form, her supplicating look—resist her!
Oh, she could drag me from the arms of glory,
And bid me stop, with vict'ry on my sword.

CHLONICE

CHELONICE.

Blest be that form!—it is henceforth immortal—
It saves my country!—Now—now then, Cleombrotus

[Unveiling.

See her before thee! See her at thy feet!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh, Gods! Why's this? Shall I upbraid, or bless ye?

[gazing on her.

Oh bless ye ever—'tis my Chelonice!

[Raising her.

Now rage—rage on ye furies of the War!

Bear your bold thunders to the tyrant's gates—

My treasure's safe! I hold her to my heart!

Fearless begin the attack; for Chelonice

Breathes not within his walls;—it is my arms

Which press and guard her:

[Voices without.

General! Cleombrotus!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Hear the impatient soldiery! Lead on!

I'll follow with an arrow's swiftneſs.—Spare!

Spare me one moment.—Mars! 'tis thus thou hang'st

(clasping her)

Upon the breath of Venus; thus anticipat'st

The dear reward of Victory; then dart'st

Amidst thy foes, and, by her touch inspir'd,

Hurl'st thy bright vengeance o'er th' insanguin'd field!

CHELONICE.

Dost thou deceive me? *this* the power of Chelonice?

[Goes to the wing.

D 2

Stay

Stay your rash speed ! your prince commands ye—Stop !
 Stir not 'till he shall *lead* ye to your spoil !
 Yes ; lead them to their spoil, thou mighty General !
 Guide your keen hunters where the tim'rous deer
 In their inclosures herded, wait their fate ;—
 The conquest will be worthy them and thee !

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh, my beloved, be worthy of thyself,
 And of the fate with which the moment teems !
 I wrest this night my crown from usurpation,
 To place it on thy brow—

CHELONICE.

To decorate my bier !
 Ne'er shall the crown, torn from Leonidas,
 Circle his child.—But go ! lead on your army.
 Here will I patient wait your cries of victory—
 The signal of my death !

CLEOMBROTUS (*as to himself*).

Oh, woman !

CHELONICE.

'Tis not a woman's, but a SPARTAN's threat.
 The hour in which thou vanquishest Leonidas,
 Prepare the pile, to flame around his daughter !

CLEOMBROTUS.

Princess ! thou dost mistake thy duty.—Spartan,
 And daughter of Leonidas, are titles
 Dearest to thee—

CHELO-

CHELONICE.

Mistake my duty, said'st thou?

When at a husband's feet I ask a father's life,
 Do I *mistake* my duty?—If I do,
 I'll ever so mistake, and boast my error!
 Yes, 'till Leonidas sits thron'd in safety,
 His daughter shall forget she is a wife;—
 Tear from her heart each trace of long past fondness,
 And own no ties, but those first awful ones
 Stamp'd there by nature.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Wife of Cleombrotus!

Thy honour and thy fame's deriv'd from him;
 Thy happiness from the same source should flow.
 How dear those hours—for sure such hours have been,
 When thou disclaim'st all joys, but in my love.

CHELONICE.

Hadst thou found bliss in love—

CLEOMBROTUS (*smiling*).

I'd not sought bliss on thrones.

Thus, as a lady would you chide, and this
 Let all the *subject* world receive as law.
 Let them be taught that in the humble shade,
 Far from the reach of proud ambition's eye,
 Felicity has rais'd her grassy seat,
 And wantons there with love.
 But, madam, I was born to reign!
 And he *so* born, feels fires that vulgar souls

Could

22 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Could not endure.—Felicity to us,
Is not a nymph in humble russet clad,
Sipping the dew-drops from the silver thorn,
Or weaving flow'rs upon a streamlet's brink—
Oh, no! she's SCEPTER'D, and her gifts are CROWNS!

CHELONICE.

I have a soul, to taste her gifts, like thine;
I have a mind that grasps sublimer cares
Than cottage nymphs can know; I would be great
And bear the cares of thousands.—But ambition,
And ev'ry lofty sentiment it gives,
Sinks to the earth, when weigh'd against *his* life
From whom I drew my own.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Were I dispos'd
To grant thee *all*, and sink again to nothing,
Yet am I *bound* to lead my forces on.
It is not glory, nor the hope of fame
The mercenary feels—his God is plunder.
Should I protract their promis'd hour of harvest,
Disgust and mutiny would fill their ranks—
I cannot, dare not, yield to thee.

CHELONICE.

Farewell!

I'll be the herald of thy near approach.
The child shall bid the father bare his bosom
To her lord's sword;—shall bid the citizens
Throw wide their portals to admit the conqueror.

Then, whilst my Spartans bow their necks beneath thee,
 And from a *parricide* receive their chains,
 Then shall the last sad sighs of Chelonice,
 Mix'd with the shouts of victory, proclaim
 Her murd'rous husband, Lacedemon's king! *[going.]*

CLEOMBROTUS.

The last sad sighs of Chelonice——Oh!

[following, and leading her back.]

Sweet, cruel tyrant, who is victor now?
 Nature! in mockery thou stil'st us LORDS,
 And bidst us govern, in this turbid world.
 Th' historic page, recording all the acts
 That stand the loftiest in an empire's annals,
 Reports but WOMAN's will!

CHELONICE.

Then thou dost yield!

How my soul thanks thee, peaceful hours shall tell.
 Now, on joy's swiftest pinions let me bear
 The grateful tidings to the gates of Sparta,
 Oh filial duties, be ye ever crown'd
 With joy as pure, as blesteth Chelonice!

[Exit, led by Cleombrotus.]

Enter MEZENTIUS and COREX.

MEZENTIUS.

The conf'rence thou hast heard.—Where now the hopes,
 The high rais'd hopes, we brought with us from Thrace?

COREX?

COREX.

They must exist no more.—She who could win him,
 To spare her Lacedemon but an hour,
 Now when th' impatient soldiery pant for conquest,
 And ev'ry breast glows with portentous ardor,
 Next, may like Omphale transform her Hercules
 To story in the loom his *bloodless* siege.

MEZENTIUS.

But Thrace boasts warriors of more stubborn nerves;
 They neither know to yield to woman's threats,
 Or man's defiance. The laconic prince
 Entic'd us from our native fields, to curb
 Those rebel citizens, who yet disown
 His rights in Lacedemon; our reward
 Their herds, their jewels, and their treasur'd wealth;
 Must we forego the riches he affianc'd,
 Because his Chelonice begs forbearance?

COREX.

No——

The wages of our labour are at hand;
 Our troops obedient; why then not assault
 The city we came hither to reduce,
 And gather for ourselves the promis'd blessings?

MEZENTIUS.

Our country's genius, Corex, speaks in thee!
 Aftrea, throw thy useless balance by,
 Thy *sword* is all we ask;—he who bears that,
 Can right himself, and punish his deceivers.

COREX.

COREX.

Let caution guard her sword! Cleombrotus,
Supported by th' Iberians, may prevent
The glorious perfidy we meditate.
Revolt seems ripe.—See how resentment burns

[*Looking thro' the wing.*]

Amongst the troops, whilst he unfolds his will
To spare Leonidas for this one night,
The pain to be unking'd. [Contemptuously.]

MEZENTIUS.

Let us assist,
Fanning with secret breath the struggling flame;
And then this woman's soldier shall be taught,
Those grand events which mark the fate of empires,
And stand, protruded, to instruct the world,
Are not the coin of female artifice,
But struck by genius, from a bolder dye! [Exeunt.]

*Scene changes to the Palace.**Enter LEONIDAS and AMPHARES.*

LEONIDAS.

Forfaken by my child! It should be so.
This is an hour of congregated woes,
And the barb'd point of that should not be wanting.
Doth the enemy advance?—Left by my daughter!
Left for a rebel husband!—They are too tardy.
Destruction! flow of foot, to those who'd meet thee,
Quicken thy pace!

E

A M.

AMPHARES.

Destruction hastens on.

The princess fled, and longing for thy crown,
Urges her husband to th' unnatural conquest.

LEONIDAS.

I do not curse—mark me! I do not curse them.
Leonidas and cruelty are sounds
That in the mind of Greece combine, and live,
Like pestilence, and its funereal urns.
Am I *now* cruel? Those late turbid veins,
In which such raging fires have cours'd each other,
Have now no pulse for cruelty. Yet should I—
Oh, the thought reuses all my latent fury—
Should I, amidst the battle, meet those pelicans!
Gods! grant me such a moment, that my life
In that last closing act, may end more blest,
Than crowns, and vengeance ever made its progress!

NICRATES. (*without.*)Where is the king? (*enters.*)

LEONIDAS.

Here's he, who in an hour
Shall be the king no more.

NICRATES.

Not so, Leonidas!

The enemy, whose late deserted camp
Pour'd all its eager troops upon the plain,
Are hous'd again beneath their tented roofs;
Their banners clos'd; their spears' bright gleams ex-
tinguish'd.

LEONI-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

27

LEONIDAS.

How is this known?

NICRATES.

Cloudless, the full orb'd car
Of the nocturnal goddess, glides along,
Giving each object perfect and distinct;
The crouded ramparts bless'd the fav'ring light,
Which shew'd their foes, retiring, and unarm'd.

AMPHARES.

This is some subterfuge. The subtle princess
And her ambitious lord, have fram'd the artifice,
To lull thee, valiant prince, in false security.

LEONIDAS.

Well hast thou spoken what thy *King* conceiv'd;
But who shall speak the *father's* mad despair?
Oh, Isis! when thou threw'st th' unfeeling flints,
And bade them rise to animated *man*,
They disobey'd thee;—*woman's* was the form
In which they sprung to life; in which they yet
Cumber the earth—our cherish'd bosom'd plagues!

NICRATES.

Oh, sir, forbear! the virtues of the princess—

LEONIDAS.

Mention her not! henceforth to name the rebel
But with the curse of parricide, is fatal
To him who speaks.—Fly to your several stations,

E 2

The

28 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

The cred'lous citizens have lost their fears,
But I'll restore and fix them in their hearts.
To live a sov'reign but one added day,
Is worth the labour of an untir'd Hercules. [Exit.

NICRATES.

Stay my prompt brother! you may snatch a moment
From duty so impos'd.—Your's is the storm,
Which rages in his heart, against his daughter.

AMPHARES.

I know I rais'd the storm, and there will feed it.

NICRATES.

Hah! to what end—what purpose?

AMPHARES.

I'll reveal it;

Not to that air of menace, which I scorn,
But to thy love fraternal, which insures me
Ready attention, and if needful, help.

NICRATES.

One bosom fed us with it's lucid stream,
One father gave to us a dear existence,
And in my heart I prize each sacred bond.
Yet not those bonds; the father whom we lov'd,
Nor the chaste mother at whose breast we clung,
Shall bribe me to forget superior duties,
Or aid thee in a cause disclaim'd by virtue.

AMPHA-

AMPHARES (*sneeringly*):

Warm from the schools, and prompt in declamation!

NICRATES.

Not so.

The plain simplicity of Spartan schools

Disclaims, and abrogates misleading eloquence.

You, bred in Athens,—where the polish'd virtues

Luxuriantly repose; giving their documents

In marble palaces, and robes imbued

With ev'ry gaudy stain that paints their fields—

'Tis you, who boast th' unthrifty charms of rhetoric,

Which makes a shadow seem substantial good,

And cloaths with glowing periods crippled morals.

—Yet let me know *why* thou inflam'st the king,

Against the paragon of female excellence?

AMPHARES.

A Paragon I thought her; and her birth

Which call'd her dower, a kingdom, fixed me her's.

Our line, a scion from that root, whence sprung

Leonidas;—which justified my hopes.

In Athens 'twas I learn'd Cleombrotus

Was made her husband, and co-equal king.

Had I been here, the Hymen of that day,

Had dipp'd his saffron robe, in sanguine dyes.

NICRATES.

But now ———

AMPHA-

AMPHARES.

But *now* my hatred is in youthful vigour,
And I have sworn their ruin.

NICRATES.

Sworn their ruin?

AMPHARES.

Interrogative brother! yes—their *deaths*!
Were they no more, then Lacedemon's free;
And who could stand 'twixt me and royalty,
But a weak boy? whose tender bud of life,
Fatality, or accident may nip.
What! dost thou mutter spells, with eyes thus fix'd?

NICRATES, (*Steadily*).

Nor spells, nor pray'rs, for surely they were lost!
Nor shall I *reason* on thy wicked hopes,
Nor bid thee dread the vengeance of the Gods;
For to a mind that such designs can cherish,
Reason, religion, urge their truths in vain!
Then fear not these, but fear my vigilance;
Go on! spread all thy toils, prepare thy snares,
And I will watch, observe, and *counteract* thee! [*Exit.*]

AMPHARES.

Oh insolent, and vain! oppose me not!
Counteract him, who struggles for a crown?
Him, who dares raise his hopes to Sparta's princefs?

Thy gentle breath might hope as well, good brother,
To puff a mountain from its solid base,
As to move *me* from purposes so grand.
Thou talk'st of virtue—I behold a THRONE!
Thou bidst me fear—I think on CHELONICE!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

*The Tribunal.**Enter* LEONIDAS, AMPHARES, SARPEDON, ATTALUS,
and others.

LEONIDAS.

Y ES, the bright sun beholds me yet a king—
 Cleombrotus is yet *without* our walls!
 For this let ev'ry altar blaze with sacrifice,
 And hallow'd victims pour the sanguine stream,

AMPHARES.

In vain shall hallow'd victims pour their life,
 And blood of hecatombs bedew our altars,
 Whilst treason, deep veil'd, spreads out her silent snares,

LEONIDAS.

Her veil shall be remov'd, her snares develop'd.
 Here, in this awful feat, where great Lycurgus
 Woo'd justice from her high *Olympian* court
 And bade her rule, *unsway'd* by human ties—
 Here shall Leonidas his glory emulate
 And rise above the pleaded bonds of nature.
 Say! didst thou find the princess bath'd in sorrows?

SARPE-

SARPEDON.

Not lost in tears, but in more stately griefs
 Her virgins tell, she pass'd the sleepless night,
 Denied to vindicate her secret visit.

AMPHARES.

Whether in tears, or sorrows more reserv'd,
 Women express their passions, or their will,
 They're each resistless arms, whose edge is bluntless.
 But sir! you're guarded.

LEONIDAS.

To a test I'll bring
 Her vaunted duty; if it shrinks from that,
 Hence tears, and feign'd submission! Not a child,
 But a false traitor, will she stand before me;
 And lose a fire in the offended prince. [*He seats himself.*]

AMPHARES.

See, she advances, with her wonted grandeur!
 Yet so compos'd and calm, as if prepar'd
 Not to receive, but grant a gracious pardon.

(*Enter the Princess, attended by Nicrates, guards, &c.*)

LEONIDAS.

Ill daughter suits it with such acts as yours,
 To come with looks, thus unimpress'd, before us;
 Repentant tears, and cheeks ting'd deep with shame,
 Would best become your guilty disobedience.

F

CHELO-

34 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CHELONICE.

Oh may my cheeks indeed be ting'd with shame,
And tears repentant, yet unheeded flow
When guilt or disobedience mark the life
Of wretched Chelonice!—Oh, my father!
Whence are those charges?

LEONIDAS.

From the mouth of Sparta,
Who files those traitors, that support her foes.
Princess of Sparta! know, this charge is thine.

CHELONICE.

If I've incurr'd it, may the death she dooms
To traitors fall on me!—Not *daughter* now,
But subject, and arraign'd, I bend before thee;—
Not to a father pleading, but a *judge*.

LEONIDAS.

'Tis Lacedemon calls thee to the trial.

CHELONICE.

Nay, but all Greece will turn their eyes towards thee,
And as thou act'st at this important hour,
Will load thy name with honour or dispraise.
Beware of weakness then—with rigour try me!
And if the crime imputed, should be mine,
Then, Agamemnon like, devote thy child
A sacrifice, to your immortal fame!
The world demands such lessons.—Oh, suppose not,
I should disgrace the glorious part assign'd me—
The daughter of Leonidas can't fear to die.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

Such firmness should by innocence be sanction'd.
Last night, disguis'd, you pass'd our centinels,
Bending your steps, where your rebellious husband
Plots Lacedemon's ruin.—'Tis your *motive*,
To this mysterious visit, we demand.

CHELONICE.

Behold it in your undemolish'd walls!
Behold it, Sparta, in thy lofty spires,
Which yet, triumphant, catch the sailing clouds!
See it, ye mothers, in the tender babes
Reposing safely on your matron bosoms!
And you, ye husbands, in whose shelt'ring arms
Your wives yet live, inviolate, and pure!
Those were the motives of my secret visit.

LEONIDAS.

Do Sparta's welfare, and her matrons' honour,
Hang on a thread so slender? Do her battlements,
Her long enduring walls, and brazen gates,
Resist destruction at a woman's bidding?

CHELONICE.

Forgive the seeming boast! Yet had not Chelonice,
Last night, stole secret to her husband's camp,
And there with every art *love* makes resistless,
Won him to change the purpose of the hour,
This roof, beneath whose dome she stands accus'd,
Had now resounded with the shrieks of death;
Whilst thro' our gates, Thrace and Iberia pour'd,
With mercenary hand, their slaught'ring troops.

LEONIDAS.

If *such* thy purpose, and if *such* th' event,
 Then, daughter, Lacedemon owes to thee
 That she enjoys one added day in safety.
 Short respite, from impending woes!
 Were 't in thy power to *prolong* her safety,
 And banish from her skies those hov'ring locusts —
 Oh! could'st thou, for an end so sanctified,
 Boldly resolve to be a *Spartan daughter*,
 And tear unworthy weakness from thy heart?

CHELONICE.

My heart itself! What *is* there can exist,
 That I'd *not* sacrifice to save my country,
 And bid my father live?

LEONIDAS. (*rising.*)

Glorious the moment! 'twould be fame immortal!
 The name of Chelonic shall be heard
 Wherever female acts of worth, and daring
 Rescue the sex, and make them shine o'er man.
 —Thy worthless husband! *ceas'd* he to exist,
 Thrace and Iberia would withdraw their troops,
 And Sparta rest from curs'd intestine wars.
 Invite him from his camp—propose this night
 To meet him in the grove—he shall be met
 By arms less tender than my Chelonic's.

CHELONICE.

Horror!

LEONIDAS,

Dost shrink?—are those thy boasted servors?

CHELONICE.

It was my father! 'twas my father spoke it —
I have no answer.

LEONIDAS.

Rebel! thy answer's made;

For now I know 'twas but a false pretence
With which thou'st gloss'd thy visit to the traitor —
Traitor thyself! and leagued with Sparta's foes.

CHELONICE.

O! filial goddess, teach me to submit!

LEONIDAS.

Submission, now, is all the duty left thee,
And thou shalt learn to practise it in chains.
Bear her to prison, as a rebel guard her,
And let her son be captive with his mother.

CHELONICE.

That's mercy yet! amidst the judge's firmness
The parent's love steps in, to chase despair.
Bring here my chains. *[They bring and put them on.]*

AMPHARES. *(to Leonidas.)*

Th' opposing principles
Of filial duty, and connubial love,
Summon their forces in her heart, and one must yield.
Forgive! if in the conflict filial duty fails,
And gives the dear-bought triumph to a husband.

CHELONICE.

Who told thee that those principles oppose,
Or that one yields? Has nature then, improvident,

So

38 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

So narrow form'd the heart, that only *one*
Of all the various duties she commands,
Can live there? Know, misjudging reasoner,
The duties of the wife and child, may each,
Without opposing, warm the heart.—In mine
They both exist—both flaming!

Spartan.

Spare the princefs!

Second Spartan.

Leonidas! oh hear us.

Third Spartan.

Spare thy child!

NICRATES.

O spare the princefs! see th' astonish'd citizens,
With supplicating looks, bending before thee!
Shall they implore in vain? They ask a fire
To breathe forth mercy on a sorrowing child;
O! hear their prayers——*Mine* is the voice of Sparta!

CHELONICE.

Plead for a rebel! Pity how misplaced!

[addressing the citizens.]

Should I be spared, the door for treason's open'd,
Nor could your prince dare punish in another,
The crime his child, unforfeited, commits.
He wisely acts, and thus I clasp my chains,
Calling the gods to witness they are dear to me;
For they're a father's gift—perhaps his last.
Lead to my prison! murmur not; be proud

That

THE RIVAL KINGS. 39

That in your sov'reign you have found a *hero*!
Who'll punish those most precious to his heart,
When crimes against *your* rights call down his vengeance.
Lead on! [Exit with guards, &c.]

AMPHARES.

See! self-arraign'd the princess goes,
Acknowledging the justice which condemns her.
[To the citizens,

LEONIDAS.

She may be innocent; yet to refuse
A sacrifice which patriotic love
And filial duty, equally demand,
Is in itself a crime to merit chains.
Amphares, speak! is there no way? Cleombrotus
Would come as *Gen'ral*, with a train too costly
For the charge of Sparta.—Is there no way,
To gain a private, solitary visit?
By Heaven the man who should perform such service,
I'd rank for ever next my crown and life.

AMPHARES.

Swift execution ever should attend
The will of princes, when that will's reveal'd.
Methinks there might be found a man in Sparta,
Who, bribed thus highly, would despise the danger;
And call it glory, so, to save his country.

LEONIDAS.

If such a man there be—thou know'st the rest!
Time presses hard, my friend, and fate allows

But

40 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

But a few hours, for acts, whose fame shall live
Through ages yet unborn.—I'll leave thee now.
Genius of Sparta! aid th' unripe design! [Exit.]

AMPHARES. (*contemptuously.*)

"Genius of Sparta!" Dost think *me* to cozen
With patriotic flames; or that I see not
'Tis thy ambition, which assumes its port?
No matter; know they're *my* designs thou nourishest,
And whilst I seem but to obey, I rule. [Exit.]

Scene changes to the Tent of Cleombrotus.

Enter CLEOMBROTUS followed by MEZENTIUS.

CLEOMBROTUS.

By Heaven, the man who stirs towards the town,
With hostile views, shall find his death, not there,
But from my arm. Nor will I bear these murmurs.
Lead back your madd'ning Thracians, who appear
Like midnight wolves, snuffing the air for prey,
Rather than soldiers, bravely met, to right
An injured king.

MEZENTIUS.

So think them! Midnight wolves
Will not retire *without* their scented prey;
Resolve then to dismiss, or lead them on.

CLEOMBROTUS.

I can do neither. I am bound by oath—
An oath revered by him who shakes Olympus,

THE RIVAL KINGS.

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Not to begin the attack 'till this day's sun
Reigns the race to him, who gilds to-morrow.

MEZENTIUS.

What *forc'd* thee to the binding oath?

CLEOMBROTUS.

To tell thee,
Obdurate Thracian! were to give thee words,
Whose foreign sounds would vibrate on thy ear,
But could not raise ideas in thy mind.
What dost *thou* know of all the sacred charms
Which hang on love connubial? Why tell *thee*
Of the sweet philtres, on the rosy lips
Of chaste, yet tender beauty? Ears like thine
Would find no music in the tale; nor own
'Twas a sweet madness, so, to be undone!

MEZENTIUS.

Undone, indeed!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Yet not undone.—My promise
Binds me but a few hours.—Ere the blue heavens
Shall in its present station see again
Yon radiant orb—by arms, or peaceful terms,
I shall be king in Sparta.

MEZENTIUS.

Hopes of coward peace
Were not the prospects thou held'st forth, to draw us
From our dear homes.

G

CLEOM-

CLEOMBROTUS.

True; war and victory
Seem'd then the road to lead me to my throne.
But should Leonidas propose those terms
On which I *must* consent to raise the siege,
Then rich rewards shall gratify your troops,
Without the crimson labour which they pant for.

[Going to one of the upper wings.]

MEZENTIUS.

Our troops will not accept a largess, prince!
Where they can claim a right; and on thyself
Rest all the mischief of thy broken faith!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Behold the messenger of peace approaches!—
What humbler cause could make *Amphares* messenger?
His rank exalted, and his skill in arms,
Render him precious to the town besieged.

MEZENTIUS.

You wish the conference private.—May th' event
Be happier, prince! than that of yester even;
When a false priestess could entice a vict'ry
From you—Oh shame! whilst grasping at its laurels.

[Exit.]

CLEOMBROTUS.

Unfurl your banners! why breathe not the trumpets?
Receive that Spartan Lord with the salute

You

You give your generals, and conduct him hither.

(*Enter Amphares.*)

When last we met, 'twas not a camp, Amphares!
That witness'd our embrace.

AMPHARES.

Oh, no, Cleombrotus.
We met, thou know'st, beneath a festive dome,
Whose echoes fed on music's sweetest sounds;
Whilst sparkling beauty lent its powerful spells
To gild the hour, and make its joys sublime.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Such hours yet wait us, in the lap of peace.
Leonidas, I trust, hath now resolv'd
To spare the bosom of his native city,
Nor drain her veins, to justify his crimes.

AMPHARES.

Secret his counsels, prince! nor do I know
Whether the gloomy tyrant waits your sword,
Or means to yield your crown without compulsion.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Art thou not come th' ambassador of peace?

AMPHARES.

Oh, no!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Ill founded hope!

[*with anger.*]

AMPHARES.

Hadst thou such hopes?

G 2

CLEOM-

CLEOMBROTUS.

Or know this hour, Amphares, were not *his*
 To waste in insolent deliberation.
 But if not peace, what cause——

AMPHARES.

I know thy question.

Tho' on no *public* errand I approach you,
 Yet will you think the cause not less important,
 Than if an empire's fate hung on my breath;—
 An empire did I say? What then are empires?
 What, all the mighty nothings which embroil,
 From age to age, the sons of mad ambition—
 Compar'd to those soft int'rests of the heart,
 Which tho' in name less splendid, have a power,
 That all the grander impulses must stoop to?

CLEOMBROTUS.

Then thou'rt ambassador from Chelonice!
 What says my most belov'd? What fragrant message
 Breath'd her sweet lips, to him, whose fate she rules?

AMPHARES.

No message bear I, prince! for unsolicited
 Amphares comes, and perhaps returns *unthank'd*.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Forbid it courtesy! what urged this visit?

AMPHARES.

Say rather what urg'd *thee*, to sleep last night
 Within thy camp, whilst ev'ry Spartan citizen
 Kept wakeful, to salute thee once more king?

THE RIVAL KINGS. 45

CLEOMBROTUS.

What but the powerful influence thou hast nam'd,
My Chelonice!

AMPHARES.

Hah! was she the destiny
Who snatch'd thy sceptre from thee?

CLEOMBROTUS.

Why, Amphares,

This sudden flashing of thy eye? this scorn?
Her filial heart was agoniz'd; it ask'd——
Could I refuse? She kneeling, ask'd one day
For Sparta, and her fire.

AMPHARES, (*with contempt.*)

For Sparta, and ——

But I'll not add the name; your eyes shall witness
For *whom* she knelt, and ask'd you to withhold
Th' impending sword.

CLEOMBROTUS.

For whom! for whom say'st thou?

AMPHARES.

Why shou'd I speak? Such tales are met ungraciously.
Hard to excite belief, of what to yield to,
Is to embrace the keenest agonies
Fate hath prepar'd for man.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Heed me, Amphares!

The charge thou'dst lead to, cannot be mistaken.

I see

46 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

I see thou'rt come to raise suspicion *here*,
Where yet suspicion never knew to live;
But leaft to live, when pointed at my wife!

AMPHARES.

Thus should it be.—This is the magic philtre
Bestow'd by Hymen in the bridal cup;
Which when once swallow'd, makes a man—a husband.
[sneeringly.]

CLEOMBROTUS.

What is a husband? *[angrily.]*

AMPHARES.

What his wife shall please;
Credulous, doating, disbelieving, blind!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Were I of that quick temperament, which flames
And blazes at a touch, thou'ft said enough
To raise a fire unquenchable, in which
Thou, its first victim, should'ft be sacrificed.
Yet tho' my passions do but slowly mount,
They're overbearing as the self-will'd ocean,
Which, in its anger, dashes at the sky;—
Beware!

AMPHARES.

I'm caution'd;—from regard, not fear.

CLEOMBROTUS.

I know thou fear'ft not, nor can I suspect.
Six yearly suns have belted round the world,
Since

THE RIVAL KINGS.

47

Since Chelonice at the altar vow'd,
The duties of connubial love to me.
Her heart I've studied; watch'd each turn of temper;
Nor ever saw caprice inhabit there.
Her virtues, tho' chastis'd by female softness,
Are of the grand and stubborn sort,
Which self-collected, smile upon temptation.
O! shall the rooted confidence of ages
Break from its stem, and be the sport of whispers?
No, Amphares; the husband of Chelonice
Can have no fears, but for his own demerits.

AMPHARES.

All then is well.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Not so; for tho' no doubts
Can reach my heart, that would dishonour her,
To justify her fame, I must know all
That malice dares suggest.

AMPHARES.

If to the grove,
Which bounds the palace gardens, and extends
Its love-inviting shades towards your camp,
You'll bend your evening steps, you'll there behold
Whom I forbear to name.—These ears imbib'd
The whisper'd assignation, as unseen
I loiter'd near.—The impulse of the moment,
Bade me convey to thee th' ingrateful secret.
If I did wrong, forgive me for the motive!

CLEOM-

THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CLEOMBROTUS, (*eagerly.*)

Amphares!—I'll be calm.—Yet I'm not touch'd.
Who is the villain? tell me that.—His name! [*impetuously.*]

AMPHARES.

You'll know——

CLEOMBROTUS.

Trifle not! By heaven it were more safe to tread
Upon the burnish'd adder, than to halt
An instant on my rous'd suspicion.—Tell me!

AMPHARES.

Thou know'st Cephifus; on whose downy cheek
The half-blown blossom spreads its doubtful red;
His tuneful voice seems the first notes of love,
And his light form bespeaks a Sylvan god.
Him wilt thou find——

CLEOMBROTUS.

Enough! adieu Amphares!

Think not I harbour doubts; but I will prove——
For Chelonice's sake, I'll prove this night——
Farewel! escort this stranger to the walls.

AMPHARES.

Evening's first shades is the appointed period.
This, and the watch word, Ceres, let's you pass.

[*giving a jewel.*]

CLEOMBROTUS.

I will be there *before* it's shades.

AMPHARES.

AMPHARES.

Farewel !

[Exit.]

CLEOMBROTUS.

The air's too close.—Now I can breathe again,
His presence seem'd to oppress me, and prevent
The act of respiration.—Yet I'm not well.
Can this be jealousy—suspicion ? What ?
Of Chelonice ? Oh my beloved ! sooner
Could I suspect that —— but he heard the whisper.
Whisper—*who* whisper'd ? not my Chelonice.
No ear but mine ere drank the 'witching murmurs
Of her chaste lips ; or if there has——Oh Gods !
The tortures of whole ages are comprised
In that one thought.—*If* there has !——
My brain seems splitting.—Oh thou sooty night !
Hasten thy ebon shades ; enwrap the world
In tenfold darkness ! not a glimm'ring star
Suffer to throw it's beams from thy thick mantle,
That quick on my dishonour, my revenge
May dart with light'ning's certainty, and blast them !

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

H

ACT

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Palace.

Enter Amphares hastily, followed by Nicrates.

AMPHARES.

Suspicious brother !

[petulantly.]

NICRATES.

True ; I *am* suspicious.

Your hasty visit to Cleombrotus,
Whom you *profess* to envy, and to hate ;
Th' impatient steps with which you seek the king ;
That fiery thoughtfulness within your eye,
Which ever indicates some foster'd evil——
Give my suspicions life.—Thus your eye roll'd
Whilst planning death for the immortal Agis ;
And such the brow you wore, this early day,
When by your arts possess'd, the wretched king,
Instead of blessings, gave his daughter chains.

AMPHARES.

If thou believ'st, that I have power, and will,
To crush to earth the beings who offend me,
Why so licentious in reproof ? If Agis
Thron'd as he was within his people's hearts,

THE RIVAL KINGS.

51

Was from their bosoms dragg'd ; if Chelonice,
Belov'd to dotage by her tyrant father,
Seeks at my bidding, patience in a prison —
What fate waits thee ? Why urge the venom'd sting,
Fatal to Agis, and to Chelonice ?

NICRATES.

Thy threat appals me not ; thy venom'd sting
May reach my heart, but shall not shake my virtue.
I've not been taught to fear to give reproof
For evil deeds, though acted by a brother ;
And should'st thou dare to screen thy guilty brows
Within the awful circle of a crown,
Then my reproofs shall glow with new found bitterness,
And what the brother scorns, shall pierce the king.

AMPHARES.

Accept my caution, and beware ! Thou speak'st
In words, good brother ! Monarchs speak in deeds.
Leonidas approaches, [He enters,

LEONIDAS.

Oh Amphares !

Thy rapid steps were wing'd by my desires —
So short the time they've ask'd ! Leave us, Nicrates ;
Secrets of state demand this hour in privacy.
[Exit Nicrates.

When expectation pants, the form of questions
Appears too cold to suit its ardors. Speak.
Amphares, speak to my impatient thoughts !

AMPHARES.

Should all your hopes be met with the success
Which crown'd my embassy, 'twould rank Leonidas
Most fortunate of kings.

LEONIDAS.

Is the wolf snared?

AMPHARES.

Not snared, but rushing eager to the toils.

LEONIDAS.

Come to my heart! Shall he escape the toils?

AMPHARES.

Yes, as the dove escapes the eagle's pounce,
When borne aloft, she trembles in the clouds.

LEONIDAS.

What can reward thee? But explain, Amphares;
Unfold the arts, which triumph'd o'er his caution.

AMPHARES.

'Tis known, Cleombrotus, tho' bold as soldier,
Bears all the lover's weakness in his heart—
Doating t' excess on charming Chelonice.
Excess of love—how easy to make jealous!
I talk'd of rivals, nam'd the fated grove,
As the dear spot where lawless cupids reign,
And sing their wanton pæans to dishonour.

LEONIDAS. (*eagerly.*)

He will be there?

AM-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

53

AMPHARES.

Yes, with night's earliest shades.

LEONIDAS.

And thou wilt meet him there?

AMPHARES.

Is't your command?

LEONIDAS.

It is my earnest wish, my ardent hope.
Are these not strong enough, to urge thy arm?
Then think of thy reward——'tis Chelonice.
Her widow'd bed shall know no lord but thee,
Son of my choice, and partner of my throne!

AMPHARES.

Hear, Jupiter! bear witness to the vow!
And now by Sparta's guardian god I swear
Not to behold thee, 'till this loyal arm
Hath rooted from the earth the thorn which wounds thee.

LEONIDAS.

Oh time! compress each intermediate hour
Into a point, that I may leap at once
O'er the wide chasm of anxious expectation,
Into the hour of triumph, or despair!

AMPHARES.

Not hours, but minutes, form the dreaded chasm.
The sun already hath his axle quench'd
Beneath the turb'lent flood; and when he next

Shall

54 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Shall spread his gorgeous mantle o'er the skies,
Thy foes, Leonidas, he shall behold
Melt like the silver drops his ardent beam
Draws from the earth, then dissipates in air.

LEONIDAS.

I rest me there! farewell! remember Chelonice!

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to the Prison.

CHELONICE enters from the Flat. The child asleep on a
Pallet. She goes to him.

CHELONICE.

Still press thy poppies on his humid brow,
Sweet sleep! Blest in thy arms, nor prison walls,
Nor chains, nor parent's cruelty, have power
To give one pang. 'Tis to reflective minds,
To sense *awaken'd* in the madd'ning soul,
That misery appears, in all its fulness.
Celestial powers! Ye know why we were call'd
From senseless nothing, into conscious life;
Ye know, why ye bestow'd the nerve to agonize,
The heart to rend; and those contending passions
Which restlessly oppose, and vex each other!
What are those chains that bind my passive arms,
Compared to those which hold my *mind* enslav'd?
They say the mind is free——mistaking casuists!
Must it not mourn, rejoice, regret, despair,
E'en as our PASSIONS please? those lordly passions,
Who,

Who, spite of vaunted reason, hold the sceptre,
And keep the obedient soul in close subjection.—
My sweet one wakes ! How now, my lovely boy ?
Art thou refresh'd ? thy slumber has been long.

CHILD.

Would it were longer ! for I've had such dreams,
Such pretty dreams ! that I am griev'd to wake.
I thought, dear mother ! that this gloomy place
Became a palace ; and those wicked chains
That make me cry to look at them, dropt off.
Oh, let me tear them off !—Were I a man,
I should be strong enough, but now they mock me.

CHELONICE.

Regard them not, my love !—The chains of gold
Upon the neck of power, or those of steel
Upon the captive's arm, are yet but chains ;
And neither, mark the happiness within.

NICRATES. *(without.)*

Oppose me not ; admittance I must have—
I'll answer 't to the king.

CHELONICE.

Who then is this,
That spite of opposition makes his visits
To the sad inmates of a dreary dungeon ?

NICRATES. *(entering.)*

Oh Princess !

CHELONICE.

56 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CHELONICE.

'Tis Nicrates! generous youth;
Why will you risk offence, to speak your pity,
Where pity's tend'rest drops must fall in vain?

NICRATES.

Alas! 'tis not to *pity* that I come;
Though thus to see you, royal, virtuous lady!
Would force a sigh from bosoms *strange* to pity.
I come to ask your counsel; to inform you
Of things so dreadful, that they will demand
All the tried firmness of your noble mind,
To bear with calmness.

CHELONICE.

Hold! forbear a moment!
What may this evil be?—breathe not a sound!
Yet—yes, now I am firm.—Speak then, my friend,
Whilst I lift up my heart to heaven, for fortitude!

NICRATES.

Oh that in gentle terms, and soft gradations,
I might unfold the torturing tale! But time
Too closely presses; for this very hour,
Unless the guardian genius of thy husband
Should grant to thee some sudden inspiration
By which to save him—Oh, look not thus wildly!
Your apprehensive mind perceives the ill—
Command me how to act.

CHELONICE.

Where is my husband?

[*Breathless.*

NICRA-

NICRATES.

Advancing to the snare, my brother's hand
Hath spread to catch him.—Deceiv'd into belief
That thou'rt unchaste; and that the grove—

CHELONICE (*shrieks*).

The grove!

I see it all—oh murd'rous perseverance!
These chains—I'll instant fly—tear off those chains!
Have I—oh proud of heart! condemn'd them? Now,
Yes, now I *feel* their weight—they hold me here;
They're fate—they're fate to my Cleombrotus!

NICRATES.

Oh, princess! recollect—

CHELONICE.

I'll pass the guards;

They cannot, dare not—

NICRATES.

The attempt is fruitless.

Their lives must answer should they let you pass;
Judge then if this heart-piercing agony,
Or all the eloquence inspired by grief,
Can tempt their disobedience to the king?

CHELONICE.

Insensate stones! burst from your cement ribs.
Ye bars, ye flints, have ye no ears for grief?
Oh, for one little breach, thro' which to force
This wretched frame.—Vain—'tis in vain! here fix'd

I

Here

58 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Here tortured, I must stay! But where's my father?

My father, did I say—oh, filiacide! [Eagerly.]

NICRATES.

He and Amphares—brother, he's no more!
Parted but now.—I'd orders to avoid them;
Yet stay'd within the ear of all that pass'd,
Then hasten'd to your presence.

CHELONICE.

To the grove!

Hence! fly from me, and bend your eag'rest steps,
To where the murd'rer lingers for his prey.
Save my Cleombrotus! ~~threw him his danger~~;
But oh, be tender to a father's name!

NICRATES.

I will obey you.

CHELONICE.

He hath been deceiv'd.

Amphares is ambitious, and *his* arts
Leonidas's noble mind hath bow'd to;
Remember this! nor let my husband's heart
Too deeply feel the errors of my father!
Oh come, my son! within our dismal cell,
Prone on the earth we'll supplicate the Gods.
The sacrifice must be heart-rending groans;
And for libations—surely from our eyes
Such sorrowing streams will flow, that tho' unhallow'd
The pitying heavens shall accept the waste,
And scant our measure of encreasing woes! [Exeunt.]

Scene

THE RIVAL KINGS.

59

Scene changes to the Grove.

Enter CLEOMBROTUS.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh ye mild Zephyrs, why so sweetly breathe?
Why gently undulates the scented air?
To such a tortured wretch ye should be hurricanes!
These glades, with agonizing fear, I tread;
Pursue their mazes with such pow'rful horror
As the mad priestess feels, when to her soul
The Demon whispers forth unknown events.

The day yet lingers; but within these woods
Where eager night imprints her earliest steps,
Adult'rous love, should fearless seek it's mate
It may be slander.—Oh! to be assured,
The gew-gaw crown of Sparta, the dominion
Of the wide Universe—what sound is that?—
Again! be faithful then my ear, and guide me! [Exit.

Enter AMPHARES.

AMPHARES.

These gloomy shades forestall the night, and jealousy
E'er this, hath brought my prey within my grasp.
Now then, Cleombrotus, I do forgive thee;
Forgive thy glorious fate that push'd thee on
To regal power, and chain'd me down, thy subject.
This hour, thy crown, thy wife, thy life, are mine!
Why linger then, to seize my bright rewards?

I 2.

In

60 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

In which embower'd recess, doth fate ordain
The earth shall drink his blood? This way, I'm drawn.
By heaven I'd miss'd him! if my eyes are true,
The base of yonder statue is his rest—
A statue, now, himself! [Exit, following Cleombrotus.

(After a pause AMPHARES re-enters.)

Fate, thou art just!
And from my reeking point, accept the drops
Which flow'd a moment since, in kingly veins!

(A groan)

A groan! then 'tis his last, for sure I am,
This crimson'd steel was in his vitals buried.
Why dread then to provoke the arm, Leonidas,
Thou'lt taught to murder! [Exit.

Enter NICRATES, wounded, and leaning on his sword.

NICRATES.

Stay! oh stay thou fratricide!
He's gone, and thinks his villainy complete.
I cannot further.

(sinks down)

'Twas a sure aim'd blow,
Tho' not within that heart he purpos'd.—Oh!

Enter CLEOMBROTUS.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Those are the moans of death, and not of love.
What wretch art thou?

NICRA-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

61

NICRATES.

Art thou Cleombrotus?

CLEOMBROTUS.

I am.

NICRATES.

I then have fav'd thee—sent by Chelonice
To warn thee of approaching death, which now
Hath seiz'd on me; and I rejoice my prince,
That—oh—

CLEOMBROTUS.

Stop not dear youth, whoe'er thou art;
And who thou art, this failing light denies me.

NICRATES.

I am *his* brother by whose arm I dye;
He loves the princess and would reach thy crown.
Here he appointed thee to meet his sword—
But plunged it haply, in a meaner bosom.
Oh fly this spot—it is Nicrates bids thee.

CLEOMBROTUS.

The brother of Amphares!—mighty Gods!
His arm that pierc'd thee thus?

NICRATES.

It was Amphares!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Stiff'ning with horror, scarcely can I question thee—
—Yet breathe one word—O! where is Chelonice!

62 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

NICRATES.

Chain'd and imprison'd by—oh—

CLEOMBROTUS.

Chain'd and imprison'd! oh distraction! speak!

Yet let thy fleeting spirit stay! oh tell me—

Alas his spirit is already fled, *[Taking his hand.*

And I can know no more.—What would I know?

Do I not know Amphares for a villain?

Do I not know my Chelonice's spotless?—

My heart *must* drink that charming transport in,

Tho' it's soft object sighs within a prison.

Oh hapless youth!—but I've no time to mourn—

Where seek Amphares? Where shall vengeance find

It's proper object? Shall I seek *her* dungeon,

Or her traducer's heart?—Oh my rous'd spirits!

Blindly I'll follow to fulfil my fate,

Where e'er your impulse leads.—Guide me to vengeance,

Or to Chelonice!

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Prison.

Enter Leonidas and Amphares, followed by an Officer.

LEONIDAS. *(to the Officer.)*

Inform the princess, that her father comes
To break her chains, and clasp her to his bosom.

[Exit officer through the flat.]

I dread the mighty tumults of her grief,
When on her widow'd heart, the woe shall burst.

AMPHARES.

Surely not sudden, should the tale of woe
Be *trusted* to her heart.—Let her first, taste
The blessings of your love.—By soft degrees
Prepare her for her loss, and for the vows,
My raptur'd pulse beat eagerly to pay.

LEONIDAS.

My tend'rest cares shall soothe her to repose;
For well, Amphares, dost thou know my soul
Delights in Chelonice.—Now farewell
To those keen jealousies, which have so long
Poison'd the tender flow of love parental!
Cleombrotus is now no more my rival;

And

64 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

And Chelonice now no more shall know
The soul-felt anguish of her father's frowns.

(Chelonice enters, looking wildly.)

Oh my lov'd child! the bonds the king commanded,
Thy father, thus impatient, bursts asunder!

CHELONICE. *(to Amphares.)*

Where is my husband? Murderer! say where?
Why start'st thou thus?

AMPHARES.

Why question *me*, fair princess?
Is not Cleombrotus before our walls,
Leading the army which will level them?

CHELONICE.

Is he? is he not in the grove? say *pale* one!
Oh that hue! guilt speaks loudly in thy cheek——
I go to seek him! [Exit.]

LEONIDAS.

Amazement! the grove——
Cleombrotus!——

AMPHARES.

Betrayed! but 'tis impossible!
Some deity's against us, or the dreams
Philosophy has blown about the world
Are true.—The soul survives its humbler part,
And *his* must have reveal'd our sacred secrets

Enter

THE RIVAL KINGS. 65

Enter SARPEDON.

SARPEDON, *(to Leonidas.)*

Pardon, that thus unbid, I rush before thee!
Amphares, thee I fought;—murder's discover'd.

AMPHARES.

What murder? Why to me are all the tales
Of murder pointed? Can't a Spartan bleed,
But strait the public eye is bent on me?

SARPEDON.

Forgive me!

[going.]

LEONIDAS.

Stay! whose death would'st thou discover?

SARPEDON.

That of Nicrates.

AMPHARES.

Nicrates!—what—my brother?

SARPEDON.

It is too true; for Lacedemon boasts not
A nobler gifted youth.

LEONIDAS.

Well hast thou said.

Whose is the guilt?

SARPEDON.

Th' assassin's fled unknown.

K

A M-

66 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

AMPHARES.

Unknown, and fled.—Then follow him, ye gods,
Whatever land his guilty feet shall press!
Where fell my brother?

SARPEDON.

As I search'd the grove,
My evening duty—I observ'd the base
Of Phocion's statue, reeking with warm blood.
I trac'd the sanguine steps, and found too soon,
The lifeless body whence the blood had flown.

AMPHARES, (wildly.)

The body was not his—say, art—impossible!
Nicates bled not there!

SARPEDON.

Alas! full well
Those eyes each feature knew, whilst from his neck
This honour'd badge I took, given him by Agis.

AMPHARES.

Go! thou'st done well. [Exit Sarpedon.

LEONIDAS.

Why breathless now, Amphares?

AMPHARES.

Why *breathing* now, thou rather should'st enquire:
I've slain my brother. [groans.

LEONIDAS.

Slain him!

AM-

AMPHARES.

I'm his murd'rer.

Start not at that.—Leonidas ! our *enemy*
 Yet lives.—Curse the deluding night ! The base
 Of Phocion's statue, was the spot, where I
 Discern'd him as I judged ; and where this arm
 Plung'd in his heart the instrument of death.

LEONIDAS.

Thou pray'dst the Gods to curse thy brother's murd'rer ;
 The prayer was just—speed it, ye winds, to heaven.
 Fool ! *this* the end of all thy perfidies ?
 Thou, he to wear a crown, and wed my daughter !
 Avoid my sight, ill-fated man, and bid
 Ambition quit a mind whose faculties
 Are suited to the *humblest* state ; nor dare
 To loose thy thoughts, again, towards a throne ! [*Exit.*

AMPHARES.

Revenge ! come thou ; absorb those *humble* faculties !
 Ambition, and my hatred both are cross'd ;
 Revenge be now the passion of my heart !
 Oh ! I will cherish it, as the mad lover
 Nurses the passion which undoes his peace.
 It shall be mistress, and my soul's dear tyrant ;
 I'll own no thought, that's not inspir'd by her,
 And to her bidding, dedicate my life——
 A short one perhaps ; yet shall its aim be glorious !

[*Exit.*

68. THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Scene, a Colonnade in the Palace.

Enter SARPEDON, followed by others.

SARPEDON. (*speaking as he enters.*)

Pursue not me! haste thro' each avenue
And ev'ry street; where wrapt in false security
Our citizens repose.—I'll to the prison,
Where but a moment since I left the king——
Alas! that prison may be soon his home! [Exit.

Enter CLEOMBROTUS.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh well known haunts, vainly I trace your bounds!
The curs'd Amphares doth not meet my eyes;
Nor can I know what gloomy tower withholds
From their fond gaze, the object of his slanders.
Hah! sure 'tis she, who moves at distance hither.
It cannot be—how hath she gain'd her freedom?
It is—'tis she! that graceful form, that step,
That interesting air, distinguish her
Alone! Shall I await her here? oh no;
As eager zephyrs fly to kiss the rose,
I, to the sweeter bosom of my love!

[Exit, and after a pause re-enters with Chelonice.

Thy father broke thy chains, thy husband gives thee
New ones! gives thee a living prison! Oh
My Chelonice! thus enchain'd, imprison'd,
Thou shalt for ever dwell, nor wish for liberty!

CHE-

CHELONICE.

O! my Cleombrotus, I scarce believe
That 'tis thy arm enfolds me.—My dear lord!
Thy Chelonice's steps e'en now were bent
Towards a spot where my sad heart foreboded——
I cannot bear the image!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh my soft love!
How much thy tendernefs o'er pays my wrongs!
Here's one approaches.

CHELONICE.

Then retire, my lord!
It were not safe, he should behold thee here.

*[Exit Cleombrotus.]**Enter* SARPEDON.

SARPEDON.

Where, Madam, is the king?

CHELONICE.

Whence is thy haste?

SARPEDON.

Part of the army of Cleombrotus
Beset our walls;—they have begun th' attack,
And with a fury, which bespeaks strong confidence
That our resistance will be short.—The rest
Advance not yet.—Princess, forgive my haste!
I seek Leonidas.

[Exit.

CHELO-

CHELONICE.

Can I forgive thy *tidings*?

Approach, thou false one! Is it thus, the man

[Enter Cleombrotus.

Aspiring to be king, observes his oaths?

Is't thus thou hast preserv'd thy vow'd suspension?

Stealing, like midnight ruffians, to the hoard,

From whence the conscious day had kept ye, trembling!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Well dost thou chide, were thy dear chiding just.

By Heaven the wretch who hath infring'd the oaths,

Which bound the promise thou extorted'st from me,

Shall by my sword be taught, how I detest

So black a perfidy.—It had ne'er been,

Had not Amphares' arts seduced me hither.

This moment in my camp, I had, impatient,

Waited those terms of peace thou bid'st me hope.

Mezentius is the man.—I'll instant seek him. (*going.*)

CHELONICE.

Go then——yet stay!——

CLEOMBROTUS.

Boundless as is thy power,

In such a cause I can resist thy prayers,

Thy tears, thy love!—Thou hast a rival here;

The only rival thou canst ever dread——

'Tis HONOUR; and what she suggests, my soul

Hath never dared debate on. Her behests

Are not confined to rules—they're sacred *impulses*,

The

The spirit of morality, sublimed;
Which, if we stay to analyze, is lost. [Exit.

CHELONICE.

Go then, obey her impulse, and chastise——
My father here? [Enter Leonidas, speaking.

LEONIDAS.

Fly then, and bid Demophilus
Lead his battalion quickly to the breach;
I'll follow with my own.——Who was it, daughter,
Abruptly parted hence, as I appear'd?

CHELONICE.

My father!

LEONIDAS.

Nay, why dost thou hesitate?
Why not confess it was my mortal foe?
'Twas he, whose troops, e'en at this living instant,
Beset thy aged father——'twas Cleombrotus.
He whose keen sword is levell'd at my bosom,
This instant left my daughter's.

CHELONICE.

Harsh reproach!
He knew not of th' attack his troops have made,
And left me, but to punish their rash leader.

LEONIDAS.

Dost thou believe him? Oh, thou easy one!
His troops beset our walls, without command!

(contemptuously.)

CHE-

72 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CHELONICE.

So he, in truth, hath sworn.

LEONIDAS.

And what men swear,

The fate of women binds them to believe.

What wilt believe, when thou shalt see him here,

Staining those pillars with my blood?

CHELONICE.

Oh Heaven!

LEONIDAS.

How wilt thou greet my murd'rer?

CHELONICE.

As my foe;

As him I'm bound to curse; and then I'll join thee,

Bleeding, and breathless, on thy funeral pile.

LEONIDAS.

Oh my dear child! come once more to my arms!

And hear me, whilst I swear in this sad moment,

—Perhaps the last we e'er shall taste together—

That the vast ruin which this hour marks out,

The loss of empire, liberty, and life,

Do not afflict my soul with half the anguish

Thy disobedience would bestow. Thy love,

Thy filial tenderness, is the sole cordial

Of my declining days. Cruel I've seem'd,

Yet oh, parental love hath ne'er one instant

Lost its sweet influence in this beating heart.

CHELO-

THE RIVAL KINGS.

73

GHELONICE.

Oh, how do I survive this moment?
Is this our parting moment? If it be,
Bear witness to my oft repeated vow,
Thy conqueror shall never be my husband;
This bosom never shelter him, whose sword
Shall pierce my father's! Bless me now—oh bless me!
A power unknown, seems to bear down my mind—
Heaven grant, it be not madness!

LEONIDAS.

I do bless thee;
My soul, my child, doth bless thee.—Now retire.

[She goes, he gazes after her.]

I'd fain indulge my eyes a little longer,
Lest they should shortly shut her out for ever.
What can this be, which cruel! thus unnerves me?
Why loiter here? all energies are lost.
Where are the feelings of the king and soldier?

[A violent crashing and noise.]

That noise, which speaks our wall's demolishing,
And Sparta's ruin, cannot rouse my blood.
Oh age, thou curse of nature! in ill hour
Thou dost evince thy power.

Enter SARPEDON, and Citizens.

SARPEDON.

Joy, great Leonidas!

LEONIDAS.

Joy! and to me?

L

Citizen.

Citizen.

The enemy's repuls'd;
They fly before thy arms.

LEONIDAS.

How!

SARPEDON.

Oh! listen yet—

Cleombrotus himself opposed his soldiers,
And forc'd his conqu'ring troops back from the breach.

LEONIDAS.

Thou deal'st in wonders! he force back his troops!

SARPEDON.

They were his Thracian band, led by Mezentius,
Who fell beneath Cleombrotus's arm.
Soon as they saw their leader prone, they fled.

LEONIDAS.

They fled! Oh, had Cleombrotus but staid,
The fortune of the hour had been complete.

SARPEDON.

Still are thy wishes prosperous! Cleombrotus
Beheld Amphares, and strait rush'd towards him,
But instant was closed in;—when like the fork
The lightning darts, which cleaves the stubborn rock
And nought resists, so pierc'd his way, Cleombrotus,
And fled for shelter to Minerva's temple.

LEO-

LEONIDAS.

Gods, ye are just! Astrea hath not fled
Back to her native heaven! Mark'st thou, Sarpedon?
Scarcely ten full-orb'd moons have o'er our fields
Thrown their nocturnal brightness, since myself,
Driven by his faction, fled for sanctuary
To that same temple, which now shelters him.

SARPEDON.

I do remember't well.

LEONIDAS.

It makes my blood
Flow warm again within my veins.—I thought
A moment since, the curse of age, *chill cowardice*
Had seized upon my heart; but now I find
It was despair, pouring her torpid urn
Thro' every pulse.—Bright hope hath chas'd her hence,
I feel again the animating fires
That have so oft consum'd the foes of Sparta.
Let us away—one foe doth yet remain,
When *he's* no more, Leonidas will be immortal!

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene the Temple.

Present, the High Priest and others.

HIGH PRIEST.

Who knocks so loud; claiming the sanctuary
Of our bright goddess?

A PRIEST, (*entering.*)

But 'Tis Cleombrotus;

He who was late our prince, now seeks a refuge
Beneath this hallow'd dome.

L 2

HIGH

HIGH PRIEST.

Oh the vicissitudes
Of human fate! they lift men now aloft,
Then dash them down, o'erwhelm'd with bitter ruin.
Hither advance, Cleombrotus, nor fear thy foes,
The altar of Minerva will protect thee.

CLEOMBROTUS,

(enters.)

I bend to thee, great Pallas! and to thee,
Her sov'reign Pontiff.—Father! late thou saw'st
My seat a throne; now thou beholdest me
Flying unarm'd, before the slaves I govern'd,
And seeking refuge in your temple.

HIGH PRIEST.

Son!

'Tis not to vulgar minds, the gods decree
Such strong reverses.—When they form a soul
To taste and bear th' extremes of human fortune,
'Tis form'd of fortitude! of wisdom! virtue!
Adore those then, who thus have form'd *thy* soul,
Nor grudge the *tasteless ease* bestow'd on men
Of lower faculties, and meaner virtues.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Father! I'm taught.

ATTALUS,

(without.)

Make way—way for the king!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Hah! my foe.

HIGH

THE RIVAL KINGS. 77

HIGH PRIEST.

Prince! beneath this sacred roof
Foes lose their stings, and enmity its scourge;—
Even to menace, in this place, is sacrilege.

Enter LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

Have I then found thee?

CLEOMBROTUS.

Have I met thee here?
Would 'twere another place!

LEONIDAS.

The place is fortunate.
The rights of kings are sacred, and unbounded;
Vicegerents from the gods, their power is delegated,
And their temples *ours*.—Yet I'll not imbue
The sacred pavement with thy rebel blood;—
Bear him away! and instant on the block
Sever his head.

HIGH PRIEST.

He claims the sanctuary.

LEONIDAS.

Bold priest, retire; and with thee all thy hirelings!

[Exit priests.]

Soldiers! your duty;—why advance ye not?

AT-

THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

ATTALUS.

The altar grants him its protection.

LEONIDAS.

Fools!

Shall I throw back the fortune of this day
 Because ye're *scruple* bound.—Now by my fate
 Cleombrotus I swear, I'll be the priest
 To offer thee a sacrifice to Pallas!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Nay then!—forgive me goddess! from thy altar
 I seize the sacred knife; and with it guard the life
 Thy temple hath protected.

Enter Chelonice, followed by Attendants with the Child.

CHELONICE.

Arm'd!

Against my father!

[Snatches the knife.]

LEONIDAS.

Bless my Chelonice!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Oh, was this well?

[Sternly.]

LEONIDAS.

Now bear him to his death.

CHELONICE.

His death, my father! Oh, remember now,
 If I'd e'er power within thy soul, remember!

How,

THE RIVAL KINGS. 79

How, on this sacred spot, where now we stand,
 Successive days and nights, beneath thy feet,
 I wept, and watch'd and pour'd my soul in prayer;
 When hither thou wert driven by th' Ephori,
 Who made my husband king.—I left his throne,
 I scorn'd his splendid diadem, and here
 For ever I had staid, had not thy Fate
 Again restor'd thee to thy royal seat.

LEONIDAS.

Oh my Chelonice, know I not thy worth,
 Thy piety, thy unexampled love!

CHELONICE.

If they are dear to thee, grant this one boon!
 Spare me my husband's life!

LEONIDAS.

Impossible!

CHELONICE.

Receive me Goddess! at thy shrine!
 For here forever I'll remain, nor quit,
 So bless me Pallas! as ——— [*Goes towards the altar.*]

LEONIDAS.

Cease thy rash vow!

Without thee, what is royalty? thus then
 I will reward thy long-tried filial goodness——
 Accept thy husband's life, but be he banish'd;——
 Banish'd to th' utmost island in our realm,
 There guarded, and immured——

806 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CLEOMBROTUS.

I scorn thy mercy—give me instant death!

CHELONICE.

Oh thou, ingrateful! Thus I bend, to bless thee.

LEONIDAS.

But that's not all—bring here the diadem!

(They bring it, he places it on CHELONICE's head.)

Bow to your Queen! Henceforward, sovereign
She reigns with me.—Ye who would bounties ask,
Or mercies taste, 'tis thro' your Queen alone
You can know either.—Hail, Queen of Sparta!

A flourish of trumpets; attendants repeat,

Hail, Queen of Sparta!

CHELONICE.

Oh my dread father! lend me to express
The joy and gratitude my heart distends with!
I see thee safe; thy enemies are fled,
And thou secure upon thy throne!—Oh Gods!
And I—I too am Queen; crown'd, and hail'd sovereign!
And what's he yonder?

(With something of scorn)

A poor exiled man!

Homeless, friendless, without a comforter,
Banish'd from Sparta.—Off thou vile toy!

[throwing away the crown.]

My homeless, friendless, banish'd love, I'm thine!
I'll follow thee to desert lands, or sun-dried meads;
My arm shall pillow thee, my bosom rest
Thy aching head, and lull thee to repose.

Child

Child.

What, will you not be Queen?

CHELONICE.

No, I'm an exile ;
And so art thou.—Come, lead us to the port,
From whence we bid adieu to Lacedæmon.

[Leading the child and holding by her husband.]

CLEOMBROTUS.

Thou matchless woman!

LEONIDAS.

Most ungrateful daughter
Wilt leave me then to solitary age?
Abandon him who liv'd to cherish thee!

CHELONICE.

Not for whole worlds, wert thou not king again.
But how could I give joy to thee, myself
A wretch? My heart would still be cold and joyless—
A wanderer, within my father's palace.
This is my home—my resting place, and here
Will I forever dwell. *[Leaning on her husband's bosom.]*

LEONIDAS.

Go then, thou ingrate!
And with thee take thy father's curse.—May he
For whom thou sacrific'd so much, reward thee
With scorn, neglect, and hatred! may he wring
Thy heart, and thus revenge my bitter pangs,
On thee who giv'st them!

[Exit.]

M

CHELO-

82 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

CHELONICE.

Oh! Cleombrotus,

Canst thou be this? Oh no! I read thy soul;
Through the soft dazzling-circle of thy eye
It speaks immortal love!

CLEOMBROTUS.

Well hast thou read!

And in that volume thou shalt read forever
Thy sparkling virtues;—yes, *they* will illumine
These fading orbs, though time should dim their beams,
Or quench the brighter flames that live in thine.
And when in some ambitious hour, my soul
Sickens for sceptres, and revolves on crowns,
Th' alluring phantoms I will bid avaunt;
And seek the dearer empire of thy heart!—
There I will reign in arbitrary pomp,
And rule with all the tender tyranny of love.

CHELONICE.

Oh father, hearest thou? what a blest banishment
Thou hast decreed us! Instant we'll begin
To taste those joys, the marble colonades
Of regal domes, were never known to house.

Come my sweet boy! thou wilt not learn in exile
The graceful arts of courts, but thou shalt learn
The highest art—the art to emulate
The deeds of dignity; the art to scorn
A vulgar act, though cloath'd in ermin'd robes,
Or sweeping the proud train of distant state!

CHELO.

CHELONICE, supported by CLEOMBROTUS, leads her child.
—They go to the wing, follow'd by guards, &c. A noise without—they turn.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Whence those deep groans?—surely the cry was death.

CHELONICE (*shrieks*).

Oh Nature shield me in this horrid moment!
 My father bleeding flies before Amphares—
 Now, now Cleombrotus be true to Virtue
 And save a parent!

LEONIDAS enters reeling, then sinks and drops his sword.
 CHELONICE supports her father—CLEOMBROTUS
snatches the sword and meets AMPHARES.

CLEOMBROTUS.

Stay! behold a bosom
 More meet than his, t' arrest thy murd'rous sword;
 An arm more fit to give due chastisement
 To vices black as thine!

AMPHARES.

Within his bosom
 My sword already hath engrav'd revenge;
 And when from thine its quivering point hath drawn
 The ruddy stream, the crown of Lacedemon
 Will glitter on the brow of scorn'd Amphares.

(They fight—AMPHARES falls.)

CLEOMBROTUS.

Thy brow must find its diadem in dust,
 Leonidas's sword, urg'd by my arm

M 2

Hath

84 THE FATE OF SPARTA; OR,

Hath work'd a double vengeance.—This alone,
 Could expiate thy crimes against the princess;
 The blood now rushing from thy heart
 Obliterates the stains, thy tongue imbued.

AMPHARES.

Oh, had my erring sword—but 'tis too late—
 Thy fortune triumphs—if my breath would hold
 To utter all the curses that I——oh—— [Dies.

CHELONICE.

Look up my father! stretched beneath thy feet
 Amphares lies.—Cleombrotus—my husband.—
 With grateful pride I will repeat the sound—
 My husband hath reveng'd thee on thy foe!
 Oh then be cheer'd, and thro' long years to come.—

LEONIDAS.

Alas! nor years, nor instants, now remain.
 The villain hath——oh Chelonice——
 Yet, yet support me! with my dying breath
 I came to bless thee; to my closing eye
 Be thou the last dear—oh those bitter pangs!
 Ascend my throne.—Thy husband hath reveng'd me—
 The crown of Lacedemon and thy heart,
 His rich rewards!——oh may ye— [Dies.

CHELONICE.

Th' unfinish'd blessing sinks upon his lips,
 But wafts his soul to heaven.—O! awful hour,
 I have no more a father! [Groans.

(Continues kneeling behind the body and bending over it.)

CLEOM—

CLEOMBROTUS.

Cherish thy tears, and be thy sorrows sacred!

The voice of consolation, now were gross—

But SPARTANS bear ye witness to my life!

Your glory, and my Chelonice's bliss.

Are the sole objects which shall hence engross it.

Bear ye the bleeding body to the palace,

And screen it from the insults of the croud,

Who now will triumph with indecent joy

O'er him whose nod a moment since, they worshipp'd.

Ere I depart I'll sacrifice to heaven;

And prostrate will adore th' envelop'd will,

Which thus thro' darkness works our brightest days,

And darts his glory, o'er our thorny ways.

THE END.

E P I L O G U E

WRITTEN BY MRS. COWLEY.

SPOKEN BY MRS. SIDDONS.

THINK *you* our Author copied from the life
In drawing such a daughter——such a wife?
Judging from what we *know*——(*archly*)—I'm half afraid
The Piece is fancy—yet I ask your aid
To fix my judgment. Fairly try the cause,
Try it, by that sublimest of all laws
An English Jury!—I recall the word—
Ha, ha, was ever mortal so absurd?
'Twould half annihilate e'en me, with fears,
What!—try a Poet by his scribbling Peers?
Oh let the Court “take any other form,
“And my firm soul shall 'bide th' pitiless storm!”
Resolve yourselves to a Committee of the House
And *prosecute*—yet ah! no palpitating mouse
Would tremble more at stern Grimalkin's fury
Than I—should brother bards compose our Jury,
No Wit cou'd save us, and no hope wou'd cheer,
Our Crimes wou'd be so PLAIN, the case so CLEAR*;
Mercy thrice blest! her power wou'd vainly try,
And GUILTY!—GUILTY!—DEATH! wou'd be the cry.

* The words printed in capitals are spoken in a grave sonorous tone.

Well

E P I L O G U E.

Well then, I'll make you all my Jury as you sit,
Ye dear Celestials! Gallery! Boxes! Pit!
I'm now a Pleader—Mark me pray—the same,

Hum.

COUNSELLOR SIDDONS—do you know the name!
I have no Brief (*sighing and looking at her hands*) 'tis true,
but there my Case

By many a LEARNED Brother's, kept in face.
How many a white clear band, and powder'd tye,
That with the blossoms of the hawthorn vie,
Parade the Hall, and nod, and smile in vain; (*nodding,*
smiling, &c.)

Attornies smile again—but don't retain.
Whilst the Leviathans of laws rough ocean,
Distend their jaws, and gobble every motion.

But all this while I have forgot to plead;—
If your sweet eyes speak truth, I've now no need.
Our trembling hopes in their bright beams shall bask,
You seem prepar'd to grant, all they can ask;—
Your hands they ask—*such* thunders do not fright;
Repeat the peal once more, and then good night.

*

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